

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5660

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 6343

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AORG, LA

SUBJECT: EMBASSY STAFFING

REF: STATE 276705

1. I HAVE HAD THE EMBASSY'S STAFFING LEVEL UNDER CONTINUOUS REVIEW SINCE MY ARRIVAL AND HAVE DETERMINED THAT WE ARE INDEED AT A "BARE-BONES" LEVEL. IN FACT, I SOMETIMES WONDER WHETHER WE ARE NOT BELOW THAT, GIVEN THE SIGNIFICANT PERIODS WHICH STAFF MEMBERS MUST OR LEGITIMATELY MAY SPEND AWAY FROM POST.
2. WITH THE PERMANENT DEPARTURE ON NOVEMBER 25 OF A TELECOM EMPLOYEE, OUR RESIDUAL COMPLEMENT WILL DROP TO 27, INCLUDING THE SIX MARINE GUARDS (WHO ARE DOING A FINE JOB AND SHOULD DEFINITELY BE RETAINED). OF THE REMAINING 21, ONE IS THE USIS OFFICER AND TWO ARE DAO. THAT LEAVES A STATE COMPLEMENT OF 18. WE HAVE ONLY THREE AMERICAN SECRETARIES FOR ALL THE CLASSIFIED WORK; FORTUNATELY, THE DAO SERGEANT -- WHO IS MEANT TO BE AN EXEC AND AN INTEL ASSISTANT -- KNOWS HOW TO TYPE. WE HAVE FSO'S TYPING, FILING AND TRANSLATING.
3. MARRIED PERSONNEL ARE ENTITLED TO FAMILY VISITATION TRAVEL (FVT) TO THE UGFS. AT THE RATE OF 48 CALENDAR DAYS PER YEAR. THIS MEANS, IN THE ADMINISTRATION SECTION FOR EXAMPLE, WHERE

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TWO OF THE FOUR OFFICERS WHO WILL BE ON BOARD AS OF JANUARY

HAVE DEPENDENTS IN THE U.S., 96 CALENDAR DAYS OF LEGITIMATE ABSENCE, OR MORE THAN ONE-FOURTH OF A MAN-YEAR. SINGLE PERSONNEL AND THOSE WITH SPOUSES AT POST REMAIN ELIGIBLE FOR R&R, AND ALL OF US ARE ENTITLED TO -- AND OFTEN IN NEED OF -- ANY REMAINING ANNUAL LEAVE, PARTICULARLY FROM A POST AT WHICH DIVERSIONS ARE SO LIMITED AS THEY NOW ARE IN VIENTIANE. (IN THIS CONNECTION, NON-PROFESSIONAL COURIER TRIPS TO BANGKOK -- INSTITUTED AT RALPH SCARRITT'S SUGGESTION -- HAVE ALREADY PROVED TO BE A VALUABLE MORALE FACTOR.)

4. THESE AUTHORIZED ABSENCES STRETCH US THIN. IN THE CASE OF OUR C&R UNIT, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH TWO EMPLOYEES, ONE WILL DEPART FOR R&R NEXT MONTH, AND AS SOON AS SHE RETURNS THE OTHER WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR FVT. THUS WE WILL HAVE SIX STRAIGHT WEEKS WITH ONE REGULAR EMPLOYEE ABSENT THERE, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE BEEN PROMISED TDY HELP FOR ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THAT PERIOD.

5. FURTHERMORE, WE FREQUENTLY HAVE TO SEND PEOPLE TO BANGKOK FOR CONSULTATION ON BUDGET MATTERS, PROCUREMENT OF GENERATOR PARTS DISCONTINUED BY THE MANUFACTURER, OR ANY OF A HOST OF OTHER OFFICIAL PURPOSES. ALSO, ANY PROTRACTED OR NON-ROUTINE MEDICAL PROBLEM NOW REQUIRES TRAVEL TO BANGKOK, AS DOES DENTAL WORK. FINALLY, THERE ARE CONFERENCES -- CONSULAR, NARCOTICS (WHICH WE MAY HAVE TO MISS), AND OTHERS.

6. SO FAR WE HAVE MANAGED TO GET ALONG WITH A MINIMUM OF TDY HELP FROM OUT OF COUNTRY, AND I TRUST THAT WE CAN CONTINUE TO DO SO. BUT THE RESIDUAL STAFFING IS AT ROCK-BOTTOM NOW, AND I CAN IDENTIFY NO RPT NO AREA IN WHICH WE COULD ABSORB A CUT.

7. WHILE IT GOES A BIT BEYOND THE SCOPE OF YOUR INQUIRY, I WOULD LIKE TO NOTE THAT -- ASSUMING THE POST IS STILL OPEN AT THAT TIME -- WE FACT WHOLESAL TURNOVER NEXT SUMMER. IN THE PERIOD FROM MAY THROUGH AUGUST, ALL FIVE POLITICAL OFFICERS, THE ECONOMIC/CONSULAR OFFICER, THE DATT, THE ADMIN OFFICER, THE GSO, THE DISBURSING OFFICER, AND ONE SECRETARY ALL BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR TRANSFER. I NOW THAT REPLACEMENTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR SOME OF THESE POSITIONS AND THAT THE

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SEARCH IS ON IN OTHER CASES, BUT THE TIMING MAY BE INTRICATE. I AM SURE THAT RALPH SCARRITT AND DICK NETHERCUT WILL DO THEIR BEST BY US, AS THEY HAVE DONE TO DATE.
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